Risk Assessment and Surveillance
Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members (Army STARRS)

Researchers from USUHS, are working in collaboration with the University of California, San Diego (UCSD); Harvard Medical School; the University of Michigan; and scientists from the Army and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) on the Army STARRS, the largest and most comprehensive study of military suicide ever undertaken. This study sponsored by the Army and NIMH, with Co-PIs at USUHS and UCSD, aims to enhance our understanding of the relationship between TBI and suicidality among Service Members. In FY14, major findings of the study were reported: there were high rates of self-reported mTBI in Army Personnel, with 75% of first TBI having occurred before entering the military; after adjusting for prior mental disorders, TBI increased the risk for developing several mental disorders; TBI was associated with increased likelihood of suicidal ideation; and depression and suicidal ideation were associated with dysfunction in self-evaluative systems. Other findings relevant to TBI and blast injury included the observation that data collected in the first week of Army service can predict elevated risk for many outcomes such as violent crime perpetration and victimization, TBI, and suicidality in the next two to three years; the risk factors for suicide, accidents, and homicides are very similar; that nearly one in five Service Members reported sustaining a concussion while deployed to Afghanistan; and that TBI acquired during deployment is associated with more than a doubling of risk for PTSD post-redeployment. Army STARRS has helped to identify TBI-related risk factors for suicidality, which will assist in potentially decreasing suicide in Service Members returning from deployment.